

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1590

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FOLLOWING RECD FROM CALCUTTA SENT, NEW DELHI, BOMBAY, DACCA,
MADRAS, DATED MAY 12, 1978 BEING RPTD TO YOU.

QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, IN, BG
SUBJECT: THE FARAKKA AGREEMENT AND THE ACTUAL RESULTS OF LOW
WATER SEASON

1. THE INDO-BANGLADESH AGREEMENT ON THE DIVISION OF
THE GANGES WATERS AT FARAKKA SIGNED ON NOVEMBER 5, 1977,
ANTICIPATED THAT THE LOWE WATER POINT IN THE RIVER'S
ANNUAL CYCLE WOULD COME BETWEEN APRIL 21 AND APRIL 30
EACH YEAR. USING A FIGURE THAT IN FACT IS 75 PERCENT
OF THE AVERAGE FLOW FOR THOSE DATES OVER A 25 YEAR PERIOD,
IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THERE WOULD BE AT THE LEAST A
55,000 CUSEC FLOW OF THE RIVER THEN, WHICH WOULD BE
DIVIDED 34,500 CUSECS FOR BANGLADESH AND 20,500 FOR INDIA.
THAT WAS TO SAY THAT THERE WOULD BE 20,500 CUSECS FOR
THE HOOGHLY-BHAGIRATHI AND THE PORT OF CALCUTTA.
THIS FRACTION WAS REGARDED AS A MAJOR CONCESSION ON THE
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PART OF INDIA TOWARD BANGALDESH, AND FEARS WERE EXPRESSED
IN THIS REGION THAT SUCH A SMALL FLOW WOULD IMPEDE
OPERATIONS, AND/OR PERMIT SILTING DAMAGE IN THE
PORT OF CALCUTTA.

2. WE HAVE CHECKED RECENTLY WITH PORT AND SHIPPING
AUTHORITIES HERE, WHO TELL US THAT IN FACT NO WATER

SHORTAGE HAS DEVELOPED THIS SPRING. IT HAPPENS THAT THE OVERALL RIVER LEVEL THIS YEAR ABOVE FARAKKA HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER THAN THE MINIMUMS FORESEEN BY THE AGREEMENT. CALCUTTA'S WATER LEVELS- AND CONSEQUENTLY THE DRAFT OF THE SHIPS THE PORT CAN RECEIVE, HAVE IN ANYTHING BEEN marginally BETTER THAN LAST YEAR'S, AND THE VOLUME OF TRAFFIC IN THE PORT HAS ALSO BEEN ESSENTIALLY NORMAL.

3. IN OTHER WORDS, THE INDIAN, AND SPECIFICALLY CALCUTTA FEARS AT THE TIME OF THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT LAST FALL, HAVE NOT BEEN REALIZED, AT LEAST THIS YEAR. OUTGOING PORT CHAIRMAN P.C. MITTRA SEMI-JOCULARLY SAID THAT THE SITUATION HAD BEEN SAVED THIS SPRING BY "MOTHER NATURE" WHO PROVIDED 90,000 CUSECS ABOVE FARAKKA DURING THE LEAN SEASON, INSTEAD OF THE 55,000 UPON WHICH THE MINIMUM DIVISION WAS BASED. ACCORDING TO THE AGREEMENT, IF THERE WERE INDEED 90,000 CUSECS ABOVE THE DAM, 33,700 CUSECS WOULD HAVE BEEN SENT TO CALCUTTA, WHICH IN FACT IS NOT TOO FAR FROM THE APPARENT MAXIMUM OF 40,000 CUSECS THAT THE FARAKKA SYSTEM IS CAPABLE OF DIVERTING TO THE CALCUTTA PORT IN ANY SEASON.

4. BECAUSE OF THIS PHYSICAL SITUATION. PERHAPS LUCKY, BUT IN ANY CASE FAVORABLE, THE HOOGHLY'S "LEAN SEASON" HAS PASSED VIRTUALLY WITHOUT PUBLIC NOTICE HERE. ASIDE FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONE STORY IN "BUSINESS STANDARD", WHICH VAGUELY AND APPARENTLY ERRONEOUSLY INDICATED THAT WATER IS BECOMING SHORT HERE DUE TO FARAKKA, THE SUBJECT HAS NOT BEEN MENTIONED OFFICIALLY OR UNOFFICIALLY. OF COURSE THE ACTUAL LEAN SEASON COULD COME LATER THAN PREDICTED IN THE AGREEMENT, OR A SENSE OF GRIEVANCE ABOUT FARAKKA COULD BE MIXED IN AT ANY TIME WITH COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE GENERAL LONG-TERM DECLINE OF THE PORT OF CALCUTTA, BUT IT APPEARS THAT FOR THIS YEAR AT LEAST, A LOW RIVER IS ONE PROBLEM THAT DID NOT COME THIS WAY.

LYDON UNQUOTE
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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